ISSUE #4

PERSPECTIVES

A PUBLICATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY ADVISORS

SHUT IT DOWN?

can we save fraternities & sororities?

afa

LETTER FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

It seems many of my friends on Facebook have been asking me recently to use a gif to describe my day, my job, or how I met them. Being a bit of a novice with gifs, last week I replied to a friend who asked me to describe my Tuesday. Before I even knew what I did in the gif menu of my iPhone, an image of a conductor and orchestra appeared as my contribution. At first, I was disappointed in my inability to search for, and successfully find, gifs. However, upon further reflection I realized the gif that was accidentally chosen for me was truly quite appropriate. I feel I spend many of my days at work in a similar context to a conductor. I devote time to teaching my growing cadre of new staff members the ins and outs of sorority and fraternity advising at my institution. I work daily with many students to discuss their role and their impact on the wider community. I make sure I am at meetings at scheduled times. Many of those meetings are with a group of campus partners who are trying to coordinate the work of our wider team to contribute toward the mission of our university.

I interact with a variety of stakeholders who are each working with their piece of the orchestra to be able to more successfully contribute to the overall song the sorority and fraternity community is trying to play. Whether it be a chapter alumnus advisor, a national consultant, a parent, a current member, a colleague from another campus, or an interested student all must positively contribute to make beautiful music. I can continue this analogy with most groups I am involved with – a fraternity president cannot stand in front of a group of members and wave his hands to make everything run smoothly. His members must show up, listen, and contribute in a meaningful way to be effective. It is the same with our councils and our wider sorority and fraternity communities. It is the same with our association. The Board can set strategic initiatives, but we rely upon your thoughts, participation, research, and good work day in and day out to improve our field and our association.

The AFA Annual Meeting is fast approaching. This will be a time many members anticipate. We leave the physical space of our campus or organization. We travel to a location that may be warmer than our local climate. We come together to learn, to share, and to grow as professionals. The meeting is timed when most of us are finishing a semester. We are ready to recharge and think intentionally about the semester that will soon begin.

As over 1,000 of us plan our time together in Atlanta, let's remember the wise words of H.E. Luccock, "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it."

Kara S. Miller, President

LETTER FROM THE **EDITORS**

Should we support fraternities and sororities?

This question is being asked on college campuses across higher education. Each flurry of media scrutiny can make this seem like a new and daunting phenomenon. The reality is question has been pondered since the earliest days of the college literary society.

We have answered this question before, and we should not shy away from the challenge now. Rather, we should step toward it. It seems reasonable that our organizations should be able to justify our relevance on the modern college campus. So, we make our case.

However, the challenges we now experience require more than the same old tired answers. We need new ideas, innovative ideas, transformational ideas. Of course, having an idea is great, but it will accomplish little if it is never implemented. It is a harsh realization for a young professional when they come to understand that simply having a great idea is not enough.

Many of us have likely witnessed the student who returns from a leadership experience inspired with a new hope for the future. Their excitement turns to disenchantment as ideas fall on deaf ears. The same dynamic can play out among professional staff and advisors. Someone has a great idea! Perhaps it is a new model for funding and staffing structure, a new program, or best practices learned from another organization. Again, in the end we see the disenchantment of a once passionate individual as funding fails to materialize, new programs never get approval, and the norms of the culture persist.

It can be easy to place blame on external factors for these failures. However, if someone is truly committed to making an impact, they must take ownership for their influence. We face serious and complex problems within fraternity and sorority life. Addressing these challenges will undoubtedly require new and innovative thinking. However, relying on the superiority of an idea to win the day will always fall short.

To develop the necessary support for fraternities and sororities, to move toward solving real problems, we require more than ideas. We need to influence others, create buy in, and generate awareness. This will require leadership and persistence.

So, here is our attempt to help with a guide for not just why you should support fraternities and sororities, but also how. If you are looking for short term solutions, you are likely to be disappointed in this issue. Instead our authors map out the importance of a long-term plan. They outline new ways of thinking about our work, and the value we place on longevity in a position. They challenge conventional notions of what support looks like, and they remind us of our responsibility to educate all students. They take you beyond a few good ideas, they give you the long-term strategy to address the challenges we are facing today.

As you turn the page, we remind you of this; it is going to be hard work,
and it is going to take a long time.

Emilee Danielson-Burke & Noah Borton
Co-Editors

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Meredith Bielaska shared Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors' post.

October 25 at 9:37am ·

Make sure to check your mail this week for your edition! If you are not an Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors member, now is a great time to consider membership and get perks like Perspectives!

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IN THIS ISSUE:

HOW TO ADVOCATE

For the Fraternity/Sorority Experience

5 **WHAT'S THE PLAN?**
Helen Lahrman

9 **IT IS TIME TO INVEST**
Noah Borton

15 **ORGANIZING FOR CAMPUS FRATERNITY & SORORITY PROFESSIONALS**
Dan Wrona

20 **RESTART WITHOUT STARTING OVER**
Dan Bureau

23 **ALL SUPPORT ISN'T CREATED EQUAL**
R. Teresia Greer

WHAT'S
THE
PLAN?
HELEN LAHRMAN

WHEN crisis or emergency occurs in communities, it has the potential to derail one's work for days, weeks, or months at a time. It has the ability to tarnish confidence and stifle belief in the value the fraternity or sorority experience can add to a campus and community. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, meetings inundate the calendar, and tough questions are raised. The meeting might begin with a simple how are you doing? Then, the line of questioning quickly shifts to what is the plan to change the culture around this issue of the day on campus, or in the chapter? This is a challenging question to answer. However, now more than ever, a plan is needed to provide guidance in developing answers, and identifying intentional next steps for action.

Sandy Alderson knew a thing or two about having a plan. He built an entire legacy on a plan. Alderson served as the General Manager (GM) of the Oakland Athletics from 1981-1997. Under his tenure, the franchise achieved many successes where they had not in previous years. His accomplishments included rebuilding their minor league system, winning four division titles, three pennants, and then finally, in 1989, they won a World Series. However, on September 20, 1995, long-time owner Walter A. Haas, Jr. died, and the new owners ordered Alderson to slash the payroll. In 1991, the A's had the highest payroll in major league baseball. With new owners and a new plan, Alderson shifted his focus to rebuilding his line-up based on sabermetric principles. This is the empirical analysis of baseball, especially baseball statistics that measure in-game activity such as on-base percentage.

Alderson eventually left the A's organization in 1997. His long time mentee, Billy Beane, was promoted to GM of the Athletics. Beane continued Alderson's plan with a mission to transform the A's into one of the most cost-effective, and successful, teams in baseball. His plan paid dividends. During Beane's tenure as GM, the A's reached the playoffs for four consecutive years from 2000-2003.

> **" PROFESSIONALS IN FRATERNITY AND SORORITY LIFE CANNOT EXPECT A PERFECT JOURNEY ON THEIR WAY TO REAL CULTURE CHANGE. "**

As with most transitions, the plan was not seamless 100% of the time, the A's faced major setbacks along their journey. From their 2006 playoff appearance until 2012, the Athletics did not make the playoffs nor did they finish with a record above .500. These setbacks triggered criticism of Beane and his approach in many quarters in baseball. Beane largely dismissed the criticism, defending his philosophy because it was based on research and analytics. In baseball today however, numerous general managers now follow Beane's strategy and use similar approaches to building their roster. Beane and Alderson provided a fundamental rethinking of baseball, but most importantly, they built a plan that was rooted in research and data, and they executed on that plan consistently over time.

The circumstances, and criticisms, Beane faced during his tenure with the A's are comparable to those experienced in fraternity and sorority life. Institutions and fraternity and sorority communities constantly face depleted financial and human resources. The "owners," or the college or university in this example, expect those working in fraternity and sorority life to succeed with limited resources. Likewise, professionals within fraternity and sorority life are consistently asked to fundamentally rethink their work in order to create sustainable changes within the culture – within the constraints of limited, dollars and staff – all while faced with intense scrutiny amid the latest scandal or tragedy.

Based on these constraints, the current problem reveals itself; how can professionals do a better job of building a plan rooted in research and data to better support the real change desired within fraternity and sorority life? Beane's belief in sabermetric principles, coupled with his knowledge of the game and hiring of statisticians from Wall Street, changed the way baseball players are recruited, coached, traded, and paid. His strategic planning and follow through ultimately lead to his success. However, it was not a perfect journey; he was met with failure, criticism, and self-doubt. Similarly, professionals in fraternity and sorority life cannot expect a perfect journey on their way to real culture change. They should expect and plan for failure, criticism, and lots of second-guessing. They must define what success looks like and work tirelessly toward that goal, adhering consistently to a plan, much like the Oakland A's did.

Success in fraternity and sorority is a little more abstract than success in baseball. It is not measured by wins or championships. Rather, one would hope success in this work to look like sustainable change that improves the student experience and makes a greater positive impact on members' lives and the community around them. To accomplish this, fraternity and sorority life professionals must first acknowledge what is failing to create sustainable change within chapters and communities. Community-wide bans, moratoriums, and other short-term solutions driven by crisis are becoming the norm, and arguably, the expectation in higher education. The knee-jerk reaction when things go awry has become the mentality of "shut it down." Alderson or Beane never traded a player because he pitched one bad game or struck out every at bat against a certain pitcher. They looked at those things within the larger body of data and used to it adapt and perform better in the future. This is not meant to make light of the challenges that arise in fraternities and sororities. Certainly a setback in the form of losing a baseball game has no comparison to a setback in the form of a tragedy on campus. However, there may still be something to be learned by understanding this process of responding to setback.

Professionals in fraternity and sorority life cannot view the tragedies or missteps that happen within student groups as an indicator that the master plan is bad. Rather, they should look at these events as more data to collect, review, and look analyze along with the larger body of information about the current reality. Then, they can determine if they are still on track to the larger goal. Shutting it down does not accomplish the desired the goal; it stalls the progress.

Fraternity and sorority life offices on most campuses are a one or two-person operation. Most offices do not have access to industry mentors like Sandy Alderson or the technical knowledge of a Wall Street statistician. Yet, those staff do have a leadership role within fraternity and sorority life on a campus. Thus, they are challenged to create sustainable change in the community around tough topics such as alcohol, drugs, sexual violence, and discrimination. Most professionals are wholly underprepared, and unqualified, to create meaningful plans on topics of which they are far from experts. They are left wandering and looking to others for guidance in tackling these immense problems. Furthermore, they have few examples of lasting initiatives that have solved or made a dent in the problem.

To begin this process, fraternity and sorority life professionals must first understand what they are in fact trying to accomplish. It is the adage "begin with the end in mind." Start looking at the organization or community's greatest areas of struggle; risk management and harm reduction typically float to the top in this discussion. The next step is to simplify the problem and drill down to the root causes: generational trends, lack of group/individual accountability, or perhaps mental health and wellness of members. After identifying the problems and possible causes for those problems, one can identify what success might look like in the future. Then, they can engage stakeholders in an effort to begin to establish how to get there.

Implementing and sustaining change comes from having a worthy, solid, and comprehensive plan that can be executed consistently and efficiently – even when there are setbacks. A few tips for where to begin:

- The plan must be explicitly tied to the institutional mission. Repeat the mission statement, over and over. Keep folks focused.
- A plan is contextual, is not a one size fits all approach, and is thoughtful and concise.
- A plan identifies key areas of focus, outcomes and deliverables tied to those areas.
- Well written outcomes will help track progress, determine benchmarks for the community, and assist in gauging the overall change effort's success or movement toward the goal.
- The outcomes are measurable, trackable, and contribute to a large body of data being collected.

" TRUE LEADERSHIP WILL EMERGE NOT THROUGH A QUICK RESPONSE TO A SINGLE INCIDENT, BUT THROUGH A DISCIPLINED APPROACH OVER TIME WHICH CREATES MEANINGFUL PROGRESS TOWARD THE ULTIMATE GOAL. "

Much like Alderson and Beane identified the right metrics of evaluation to drive the core philosophy of their plan, professionals in fraternity and sorority life must identify the right metrics of evaluation to create desired outcomes. As they develop, they must consider the following:

- Use data to drive decision-making and the development of the next steps.
- Invest resources in the "gap areas" that are being highlighted and discovered.
- Identify the flaws in current processes.
- Challenge the assumptions that have been normalized within the community.
- Identify practices and benchmarks, inside and outside the industry, which align with desired outcomes.
- Treat bumps or hiccups exactly as that, don't alter the plan unless they become a pattern.
- Begin building a coalition for support and guidance from all areas of campus, community and the profession/ industry.

Crises and emergencies are going to occur, so is the pitcher walking 3 batters in a row, down by 1, in the bottom of the seventh. These incidents slow down progress and bring the potential to knock teams, and institutions, off track. In the current environment, the fraternity and sorority professional is looking in all corners of higher education for examples of effective solutions. Many institutions are initiating a community-wide moratorium as an immediate response to solve the current issue or tragedy within the community. Universally slapping bans and strict policies on entire communities might help to stop the behavior the short-term, but these bans, when imposed for longer than a specific limited timeframe, create some unintended outcomes. They drive behaviors underground, and away from the people who are actively trying to change those patterns. If the desired outcome is to create long-term change, the solution must begin with a plan. Not only a bullet pointed list of things to change, but rather a comprehensive list of what changes in everyone's daily work. Alderson changed the way that managers and player personnel staff did their daily work; he changed how they spent their time, and ultimately he changed the game of baseball. Similarly, professionals in fraternity and sorority life have to alter their daily work to change the game of fraternity and sorority.

Inevitably, a crisis will bring up the question: Is the plan working? The innate need to provide some sort of immediate resolution, so that everyone feels like action is being taken, can actually take an institution further away from its desired outcomes, and take the plan entirely off-track. This creates a pattern whereby the agenda is dictated through the crisis of the day. As such, calendars are filled with crisis response meetings, and focus shifts from issue to issue at the expense of sustained effort toward the compressive plan. However, if someone has a plan, understands it, and believes in it, then their response to crisis is to continue pushing forward. True leadership will emerge not through a quick response to a single incident, but through a disciplined approach over time which creates meaningful progress toward the ultimate goal.

Baseball operations continued for the A's after Alderson left the organization because Beane stuck to the plan – even after hiccups, bad seasons and bad players. In 2002, the A's became the first team in the 100-plus years of the American League to win 20 consecutive games while still ranking in the bottom half of the MLB for players' salaries. Creating change is not about doing what others are doing. Nor is it about throwing the plan out when dramatic change does not occur right away. It is about spending the time, and using the talent, in the community to create a plan that sustains through the bumps in the road. Perfection cannot be expected along the journey; failure, hiccups, and missteps are to be expected. However, the use of sound practice, applied in an intentional manner can make a positive impact. The only way this happens is when the plan stays consistent over time, as well.

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IT IS
TIME
TO INVEST
NOAH BORTON

Staff in fraternity and sorority life frequently experience the challenge of advocating for additional resources to effectively meet desired outcomes. This task is more challenging in an environment of competing demands and limited resources. Institutions are facing questions about the value of their programs coupled with financial challenges stemming from reductions in state funding, declining student enrollment, and concerns about access (Rudgers & Peterson, 2017). Therefore, it is critical to properly frame all advocacy efforts.

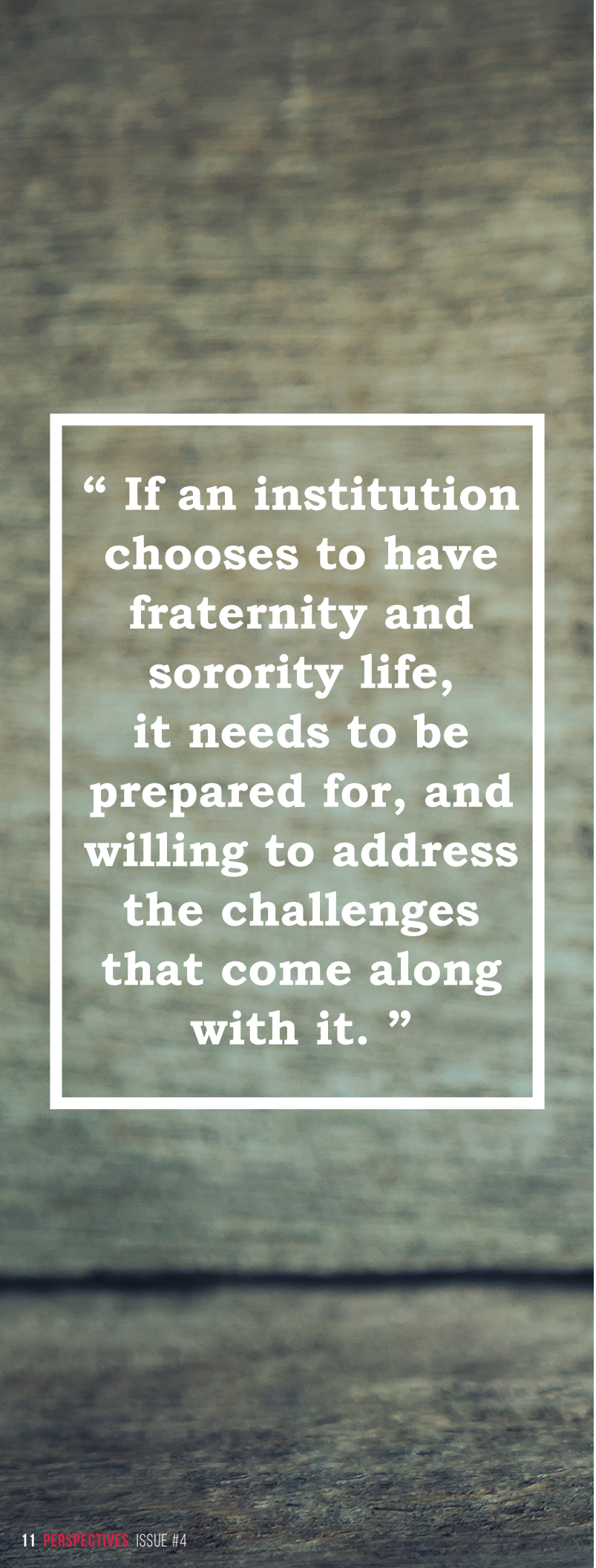
When fraternities and sororities were created on college campuses, they provided the only avenue available for student self-organizing. Greek-letter organizations emerged as a mechanism for redefining the collegiate environment (Rudolph, 1990). As such, they became the prominent organizing entity for student life outside of the classroom. Their original purpose was "to fulfill an emotional and social rather than a curricular vacuum" (Rudolph, 1990, p. 146). In many instances institutions even encouraged or precipitated the stature of these organizations by providing land and financing for housing, changing policies, and providing staff support. An air of stature developed, and this attitude has persisted over time. It is demonstrated through statements about merit, quotes about superior standards, recruitment brochures detailing the illustrious careers of alumni, and speeches espousing that "when done right" there is no better developmental experience than the college fraternity or sorority. From the very beginning an attitude has persisted that "among the barbarians, we are the Greeks," (Rudolph, 1990, p. 146).

Despite the evolution of the campus environment in the last century, to some degree, the pitch for support of fraternities and sororities has continued to rely on an attitude of elitism. While broad statements about the superiority of the fraternity and sorority experience play well to internal audiences, they may no longer be the most effective way to rally external support. Proclaiming fraternity and sorority superiority over the club sports team, leadership class or service learning program ignores the realities of student engagement within the current environment, and it potentially runs counter to the values of access and inclusion. This approach is unlikely to resonate with audiences who determine funding and resource allocations. Reaching those audiences requires a different angle.

While fraternities and sororities are no longer the only form of student organizing, on many campuses they do remain a prominent entity. It cannot be ignored that these organizations are going to have an impact on the student community beyond their own membership. They have a central role in the informal social culture on a campus. Therefore, institutions have a vested interest in dictating the nature of said impact. Institutions can exert influence through two different strategies. They can divest, pulling resources, isolating the student community, leaving the work to external stakeholders, or hoping the community dissolves. Alternatively, institutions can assert influence through intentional investment. This investment should be directed toward efforts to develop organizations that support the core educational functions of the college or university.

The case for divestiture can be compelling as significant challenges regarding high risk student behaviors collide with mounting external pressure. Fraternity and sorority members continue to exhibit higher levels of high risk drinking, more instances of sexual misconduct, and more experiences with hazing than their unaffiliated peers (Stubbs, Berkowitz, & Buelow, n.d.). Additionally, media scrutiny exerts pressure with frequent headlines such as "Do Fraternities Have a Place on the Modern Campus?" (McMurrie, 2015) and "Close the Frats" (Grigoriadis, 2017). This can prompt institutional leaders to react by pushing the fraternity and sorority community to the periphery, cutting ties and removing resources. While appealing to some, this approach does little to impact student behavior. In reality, divestiture empowers those students who perpetuate destructive behaviors while removing support for students who would seek to combat them.

For those who value and support the fraternity and sorority experience, it is important to make the case for why investment is desirable. A viable pitch for support must be framed around the positive educational value derived from investment. This strategy should be directed toward efforts to empower students to create educationally purposeful experiences which align with the institutional mission. An effective pitch for support must identify who is served through fraternities and sororities, what needs they have, and how the experience can be shaped to meet those needs.



> “ If an institution chooses to have fraternity and sorority life, it needs to be prepared for, and willing to address the challenges that come along with it. ”

When advocating for investment in the fraternity and sorority experience, it is acceptable to acknowledge the value of other student engagement opportunities as well. Modern institutions have a diverse student population with varied needs and interests. One student may find their niche on the field for the club lacrosse team, another as a varsity athlete. Perhaps someone will have a life changing experience as a Resident Assistant, while someone else finds a home in the chemistry lab. From work-study jobs to student government, opportunities for meaningful student engagement are abundant on the contemporary college campus. Rather than designing the best possible singular involvement opportunity for students, institutions must think about how to create a comprehensive array of opportunities to allow each student to find their best fit in support of their personal and educational goals. Therefore, fraternities and sororities do not need to construct an identity as the best involvement opportunity on campus. They merely need to be the best student engagement opportunity for the students whose needs are served through the fraternity and sorority community.

For some students, the best fit will be found within the fraternity and sorority experience. Investing in the experience these students have chosen may not always be the easiest course of action. The challenging behaviors and attitudes among some fraternity and sorority members may make it desirable to write them off. However, if a student chooses to make a poor decision, the institution has a duty to respond in an educational way regardless of who the student is, or what organizations they join. Therefore, it is incumbent upon institutions to invest in the teaching and learning of all students, not just the ones who are easy to reach or fun to work with. If an institution chooses to admit a student, it needs to be prepared to support that student. If an institution chooses to have fraternity and sorority life, it needs to be prepared for and willing to address the challenges that come along with it. Through the right investment strategy, the institution can develop a fraternity and sorority experience which provides these students with a meaningful student engagement opportunity.

FOUR AREAS FOR INVESTMENT:

Convincing the leaders at an institution to invest in the fraternity and sorority experience is an important first step. However, simply asking for more money and more staff is not an investment strategy. Effective advocacy efforts will require a fully articulated plan. The why, and the how, of an investment strategy should address four different areas.

INVEST IN PARTNERSHIPS

Many entities are connected to fraternities and sororities. Institutions would be well served to recognize the value that can come from relationships with other stakeholders. However, developing meaningful working relationships requires more than a roundtable discussion or an update email. It necessitates investment in partnerships established through trust, a mutual understanding of needs, open dialogue and a willingness to compromise. These things do not just happen; they take time to develop.

Alumni – Alumni of fraternities and sororities, especially those in advisory roles, can have significant influence within undergraduate chapters. If alumni are not engaged in the process, at best, they will become a non-entity; at worst, they will significantly inhibit institutional objectives. If the institution can take the time to develop real relationships with key alumni leaders while openly communicating with the fraternity and sorority alumni population, they can develop a valuable partnership.

Inter/National Organizations – Inter/national fraternities and sororities establish groups on their host campuses. The individual chapters operate as a form of franchisee of the inter/national organization that exist as a guest at an institution. Within this dynamic, an institution can easily place inter/national organizations at the periphery. However, this strategy leaves a valuable partner on the sidelines. When conflicts arise between institutions and inter/national organizations, it can quickly devolve into an adversarial relationship with both sides entrenched in their positions. Both would be well-served to recognize the value that can come from partnership with the other. Doing so requires an investment of personal connection over time, and a willingness to begin with a recognition of shared interests and mutually desirable pursuits. Ultimately, both groups want to see students succeed. Choosing to work separately is unlikely to produce the easiest path toward the desired outcome.

Local Communities – Colleges and universities, along with their students, exist within communities. While this is obvious, the geography does not always lead to relationships. There are many potential partners within local communities who can help address student issues. Town gown relationships can be rife with baggage, and finding good points of contact can take effort. Finding a partner at the institution who has inroads to the community, can provide introductions and bring credibility to early interactions.

While relationships within in the local community are outside the scope of typical student affairs work, they can provide great value. For example, community partners can help significantly in addressing environmental factors related to alcohol abuse. Developing relationships with local police departments, restaurant and bar associations, city officials, neighborhood associations, and community health departments can help in mitigating access to alcohol, addressing complaints and targeting specific high-risk events.

INVEST IN EXPECTATIONS

If fraternities and sororities are going to be an effective complement to the educational mission of an institution, it is important to set expectations accordingly. It can be easy to minimize expectations. When institutional leaders express that fraternities and sororities are free to do as they will, so long as they stay out of the newspapers and don't hurt anyone, they communicate that fraternities and sororities are nothing more than social entities. When this is the institutional expectation, additional financial investment will likely take the form of structure to manage social behaviors. This reinforces the expectation that these organizations exist to perpetuate a social culture. Investment in expectations means that an institution is willing to articulate a belief that fraternities and sororities can provide an experience that compliments the educational mission of the college or university.

INVEST IN A SUPPORT NETWORK

The relationships developed with other stakeholders should be created in an intentional manner to engage with the fraternity and sorority community. As such, the goal should be to develop a network of support for the student community where different entities weave together in a collaborative, and intentional, manner for the purpose of achieving shared outcomes.

Entry level staff in fraternity and sorority life departments are unlikely to be content experts in every issue they confront, therefore they should not attempt to replicate the division of student affairs within a singular unit. Rather, the department should serve as a conduit through which other units within the division are able to gain access into the fraternity and sorority community. Institutional leadership must take an important role in this process. First, they must articulate an expectation that units outside of the fraternity and sorority life department view work with this community as a part of their role. For example, the health and wellness staff must be engaged in prevention work for the fraternity and sorority community, and the alumni relations staff should support efforts to work with fraternity and sorority alumni.

This approach dramatically shifts the work of fraternity and sorority life staff. They take on the role of a facilitator who can connect students and alumni to needed resources and support programs throughout the institution. The fraternity and sorority staff also become an important ally for many other campus units. Shifting the focus of job roles in this manner requires institutional leadership to change the way they hire, develop and evaluate fraternity and sorority staff.

INVEST IN STAFF SUPPORT & PROGRAMMING

In an environment with competing demands and limited resources, the answer to every problem cannot be "more staff." However, adequate staffing and programming is a part of the answer. A staffing and programming model should be constructed to support the three previous points. All requests for staffing resources should articulate how the additional resources will manage the network of support and partnerships necessary to effectively impact the fraternity and sorority experience. It should be noted that a model with staff in a central role in the development of relationships and support networks will inherently favor longevity and stability. Department structures and compensation packages should be developed with this in mind.

Effective staff can accomplish a great deal. However, students only know what they are taught. In most fraternity and sorority communities, it will be impossible to effectively engage all students through the individual efforts of staff. At some point, there will be a need for resources to support programming for the student community. All requests for programming resources should articulate both how those efforts will be complimented by the network of support, as well as how the programming will align with desired institutional outcomes. This positions fraternity and sorority life to be a means whereby the institution can achieve desired outcomes with the specific population of students who choose engagement through this opportunity.

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| DAN WRONA

ARE YOU A PROVIDER OR AN ORGANIZER?

What would happen if you left your job tomorrow? Would programs and services remain available without interruption? Would students have access to the guidance they need to run their organizations? Would day-to-day operations continue regardless of your absence? Conversely, would momentum grind to a halt because everything that happens is so dependent on the campus fraternity and sorority life staff?

Far too often, the latter is the case, and it happens when when we operate under the idea that the campus fraternity and sorority professional is the provider - the primary source of resources, services, and support to fraternal organizations. When progress depends on the effort of a single individual or department, we have a serious problem.

In fact, the undergraduate fraternity and sorority experience is made possible by a much larger system of support. Unfortunately, too many professionals ignore or neglect the network of alumni, chapter advisors, housing corporation leaders, student leaders, staff in other student affairs departments, and local community leaders. I have talked with hundreds of these stakeholders as part of our assessment and consulting projects, and nearly every conversation reveals untapped resources and new opportunities for support.

Given the current challenges we face in fraternity and sorority life, the model of campus professional as a provider is unsustainable and unwise. We need a new strategy for supporting campus fraternity and sorority communities. What if we stopped working so hard to be the sole provider and started seeking other sources of support? What if we redirected some of the resources we invest in undergraduates towards mobilizing and aligning the network that supports them? Perhaps it is time to abandon the idea of campus fraternity and sorority professional as a provider, and instead invest in the idea of campus fraternity and sorority professional as an organizer.

BECOMING AN ORGANIZER

Fraternity and sorority work is inherently interdisciplinary, so there is much to be gained from adopting the ideas of other professions and industries. The shift proposed here involves engaging stakeholders, building their capacity, and distributing authority throughout the system. These principles are consistent with the practice of community organizing as explained by Gantz (2002), "Organizers identify, recruit, and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community" (p. 16). We can eliminate many of the frustrations campus fraternity and sorority professionals experience by taking a few lessons from organizers.

ORGANIZERS FIND AND ENLIST PARTNERS.

In a previous article, I proposed that professionals integrate, rather than recreate, the services provided across campus to support fraternity and sorority life (Wrona, 2016). This is an extension of the same idea. Campus professionals are generalists, working with a subpopulation of students across a wide range of functional areas. It is impossible for a single staff member or department to possess expertise in every area. Additionally, campus professionals have a limited scope of authority over fraternal organizations. It would be wise of professionals to cultivate partnerships with those who have the authority to make membership decisions, establish alumni associations, and select and supervise local advisors. Since expertise and authority are distributed throughout the systems of support for fraternity and sorority life, a decentralized strategy is more appropriate. Organizers recognize this, and work to identify and enlist those with expertise and authority into partnerships around shared objectives.

The next time you are tempted to develop a new program or initiative internally, stop. Before you begin, scan the community for potential partners who share a stake in this aspect of your community. Look for those who have shared goals (e.g., retention, alumni engagement, wellness, involvement, graduation, chapter performance, etc.), specialized expertise (e.g., housing, marketing and communications, academic success, accountability, etc.), or authority (e.g., advisors, international fraternity and sorority staff, campus police, housing corporations, neighborhood associations, etc.) relevant to the project. Develop relationships with them, learn about their concerns, ask for their ideas, and share your ideas. This may result in new sponsorships, new partnerships, new roles and responsibilities for supporters, or simply a stronger understanding of how others experience the same issue.

If you are considering becoming an organizer, take the following steps to start identifying and enlisting partners:

- Create a "names list" of your top 50 preferred partnerships on and off campus.
- Develop a roster of local businesses, agencies, and fraternity and sorority alumni, along with a process for enlisting their support of the community through workshops, mentoring, sponsorship, and other initiatives.
- Post a roster of your support network in addition to your roster of chapter leaders (hint: it should be 4 to 5 times larger).
- Draw a map of your network, make a list of all your programs and services, and determine what role each supporter might play in each program or service.
- Make a few obvious connections: Are your leadership education programs developed by the leadership office? Are they sponsored and facilitated by alumni or community leaders? Why not?
- Cut the number of student advising meetings in half, and use that time to meet with supporters instead.
- Find someone in each of the university functional areas listed in the sidebar (see page 18), and meet with them to gather expertise.
- Establish new measures of success such as the size of your network, the number of formal partnerships, the number of touches partners have with students, or the number of referrals you make to other departments (e.g., career, academic, or counseling services).
- Develop a common partnership model for working with stakeholders. The model should clarify communication plans, shared goals, services, assessment plans, and maintenance of the relationship.

ORGANIZERS WEAVE NETWORKS.

For organizers, one-to-one connections are not enough; they build many-to-many relationships by carefully connecting people from disparate parts of the network with one another. As explained by McKnight & McKnight Pullman (2015), "one of a community organizer's most important roles is to weave various participants of the community into interactional patterns that result in concrete improvements in the quality of life and create a sense of contentment and belonging" (p. 27).

Currently, many professionals operate as a hub, where information and relationships pass through them to get to other parts of the fraternity and sorority support network. This is what makes staff turnover so problematic: when the hub is removed there is nothing left to maintain consistency and momentum. Weaving the community together will increase the capacity of supporters and students to work together, it will facilitate better solutions and faster progress, and it will make campus professionals less essential to daily operations.

Consider the following steps to begin weaving your network:

- Bring together institutional research, academic support services, academic advisors, and academic chairs into a problem-solving meeting to examine and address scholastic achievement among fraternity and sorority members.
- Take council leaders to the alcohol task force, the neighborhood association meeting, and your meeting with the vice president. Create space for each group to develop relationships with one another, for example remain in the background, defer comment to others and avoid interjecting.
- Rotate the location of the regular volunteer alumni advisors meeting to the offices of your peer administrators in other departments so advisors have a personal connection to each department, its offices, and its staff.
- Create opportunities for community agencies to connect with service and philanthropic leaders and find shared interests and objectives.
- When planning coffee, lunch, or a meeting to check in with a partner, invite one or two other supporters to join.

ORGANIZERS GIVE AWAY LEADERSHIP.

A central idea behind organizing is to distribute leadership throughout the community. This may be the most difficult to accept for someone who previously operated as a provider because it means ceding authority, making others the experts, and becoming non-essential to progress. Giving away leadership can create feelings of irrelevance, but it is an important step in strengthening the support network. When supporters take on responsibility, they establish a formal tie to the community and become more invested in its success.

Part of what makes organizing difficult is that it requires professionals to change their approach and adopt different work habits. The typical provider might follow a pattern of ideating, building, finding supporters, and implementing. The order might be different for an organizer: ideate, find champions, provide resources, let go. An organizer might also begin with the supporters rather than the initiative by asking questions such as: Who needs to be involved in this decision? Who else could run this? How is each supporter best equipped to contribute to the community? What services or initiatives would they be excited to offer?

Campus fraternity and sorority professionals interested in giving away leadership might consider the following:

- Stop looking for people to volunteer for your initiative, and instead look for people to take ownership of it.
- Instead of asking all the same people, such as consultants and advisors in the region, to facilitate a leadership academy, bring together a local community association, alumni, the leadership office, and chamber of commerce to co-sponsor and organize it.
- Although the spotlight has its appeal, put others on stage so you can do more important work in the background.
- Rather than attending meetings and relaying information to alumni advisors, send them to the meeting and have them report to one another.

SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZERS

Letting go of the provider model can be very challenging because it involves a fundamental shift in the way campus fraternity and sorority professionals conduct their day-to-day work. Professionals, supervisors, and team members can do a few small things to make the transition easier.

Because an organizer's work and approach are different, so are their measures of success. Supervisors and professionals might adopt new metrics to gauge annual job performance. Some of these, which we identified for a recent client, might include:

- Increased overall operational capacity including the number, variety, and competence of supporters
- Increased support provided by supporters including volume and quality of time invested
- Number and strength of partnerships with supporters
- New support systems established
- Students' use rates and perceived value of support systems
- Ratio of time spent organizing systems to time spent providing programs, services, and initiatives

The supervisor's role is incredibly important, and it changes when supporting an organizer rather than a provider. Those who supervise organizers help identify opportunities for support, facilitate new connections, and provide political support throughout the organization. They clear the way for the organizer to build networks, adapt their expectations to allow organizers to work differently, and provide coaching as organizers build new work habits.

Perhaps most importantly, campus fraternity and sorority professionals will need to prepare themselves cognitively and emotionally for organizing work. It involves letting go of the dominant operating model in our field, building something that does not exist, and allowing a significant portion of the current role to become non-essential and irrelevant. Though this can be stressful, it can also create freedom to do more significant work. There will always be more work to do, and operating as an organizer will create the necessary capacity for success.

ADVOCACY TARGETS & POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Alumni Relations
- Foundation
- Institutional Research
- Academic Support Services
- Counseling Services
- Health Services
- Wellness
- Alcohol & Other Drug Prevention
- Title IX Office
- Dean's Office
- Student Conduct
- Public Safety
- Neighborhood Relations
- University Communications
- Admissions
- Facilities Management
- Women's Center
- Men's Center
- LGBTQ Center
- Cultural Resource Centers
- Residence Life
- Financial Aid
- Leadership Programs
- Orientation

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RESTART

WITHOUT STARTING OVER

| DAN BUREAU

DURING a recent program review/campus consulting visit, staff members asked, "What do we need to fix in order to be the high performing community we can be?" I shocked them by responding with the question, "What would you envision if you had to start this whole thing from scratch?" My response frightened them, but I stood by my question because, ultimately, the state of the community led me to believe "high performing" could not be achieved by merely fixing a few things. There were aspects of the community that, for me, required a complete overhaul and other areas that were beyond repair.

It is not unusual for professionals, especially new or inexperienced professionals, to enter a low-performing fraternity and sorority community - or one that is riddled with conduct issues or other problems. Over the course of more than 33 visits in 13 years of consulting work, it has become clear to me that while a fraternity and sorority life staff may want to make changes, it may not know how. This is not to say the staff cannot learn, or are unwilling to learn, but rather material regarding massive change processes is typically not in the curriculum of graduate preparation programs which many attend. The task of change can become overwhelming and time-consuming among day-to-day priorities. Additionally, professionals can feel continually challenged by stakeholders who may either not be on board with change, or see a need, but similarly do not know where to start.

Based on personal consulting experience, a strategy for starting to identify some of the shared characteristics that make chapters underperform, is to start with aggregate data, as underperforming chapters often result in their collective community's suffering. For example, imagine academic trend data in a situation where a number of chapters have underperformed for some time with no accountability. Fraternity and sorority life professionals must manage many significant challenges, including ongoing conduct issues, but something such as subpar long-term academic performance is often symptomatic of larger issues within a chapter and community. The decision to tackle everything is not an "either/or" decision. It must be a "both/and" decision. This requires professionals to rethink how work is accomplished. This article explains three attributes of problematic fraternity and sorority life communities or departments, and what can be done to counter these challenges.

1. Paralysis by culture and context, including resources and politics.
2. Fear of, and/or inability to enact, accountability systems in a developmentally appropriate way.
3. General fear of change occurring broadly in fraternity and sorority life, student affairs, and higher education, as well as understanding how to prioritize the myriad issues requiring attention.

CULTURE AND CONTEXT

It is human nature to be overwhelmed by change. Recognizing the reasons why one is paralyzed by the thought of change is vital. Here, a primary reason is the sense that a culture and context prevents change from occurring.

Culture is defined as how a group of people have come to define the values and norms of some shared experience (Kezar, 2017). Culture can be very rigid when grounded in assumptions and norms that may be representative of, or run in a way that is counter to, the actions of those who live within it. Cultural attributes of a problematic fraternity and sorority community or department could be:

- Demonstrated tolerance for minimum or subpar performance;
- Perceptions that "everyone does it and we just avoid talking about it;"
- Long-standing tolerance of behaviors that inhibit success because staff and students choose not to, or do not have the skills to, address it;
- General challenges that come with organizations firmly grounded in a culture that may be exceedingly elitist or unwilling to change at the chapter level.

Context is another factor. Compare a residential institution in a large athletic conference with a large fraternity and sorority community of several thousand students, about 25 percent of campus, to an urban commuter campus, not in a large athletic conference with a community that engages about 1,000 students, comprising 4 percent of the student body. The staffing model at both institutions is similar, although the large residential campus has a few graduate assistants. The context of these institutions matters in terms of how fraternities and sororities interact with each other, the campus, and the community. There are attributes of both communities that are problematic and those that are exceptional. That said, in this scenario, context will greatly influence a professional's ability and approach to working with fraternity and sorority stakeholders.

In almost all consulting projects, I hear "We need more resources and staff." In recent years my response has been, "Why? What would be done differently and scaled more broadly if that was the case?" This is another question that paralyzes people because it ultimately says, "There is a chance the staff is not totally focused on the right things to sustain the necessary changes." Sometimes it can be an opportunity for a fraternity and sorority professional, and the fraternity and sorority community stakeholders with whom they work, to consider if they have the competence to advance the change initiative. This question is actually an opportunity for teams to ask, "Given the context and culture of this institution, who can I engage to help address challenges and maintain momentum?" The answer to this question will identify partners that are focused on shared goals and expectations, while informing conversations with those individuals to work toward the success of a fraternity and sorority community or department.

RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT?

It is not surprising to find student conduct is often the least favorite part of a fraternity and sorority professional's job, however, it is one of the most necessary. Common practice is to default to the same sanction and accountability structures as undergraduates: fines, probation, suspension, charter removal, and restricted intake/membership practices. The same old sanctions do not seem to work. Additionally, in some cases, especially hazing allegations, a sanction can never be issued as the investigation dies on the vine due to a lack of evidence.

Therefore, some professionals let the process dictate the action, and in some cases they may choose to take no action at all. If there is a finding of responsibility, professionals feel prepared to assign a sanction; if not, they feel there is nothing else to be done. When I talk to professionals about their views on addressing violations they believe to be true, I ask them when was the last time they went to an entire chapter to directly express concerns about the information being presented. I have found value in requesting to attend chapter or council meetings to address problematic behaviors. I call it "deaning" the issue. I go in to explain what I have heard. I let them know the conduct process has ended, and regardless of the outcome, they know if the behavior was in fact occurring. I let them know I am happy to help them

address the behavior if they wish to, and as long as legally acceptable, I could provide them amnesty to address the behavior. However, if it is found that the behavior was indeed happening and they did nothing to stop it, even after I offered help, then I would advocate for significant sanctions. I felt this creative approach to helping chapters identify an issue and feel empowered to change the course of their chapter was better than waiting for the next time an incident occurred.

> "EVERY PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE BY TAKING NECESSARY ACTION TO LEARN IN AREAS WHERE THEY ARE ILL EQUIPPED."

KEEPING UP WITH A CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The field is scared. Here, I mean not only fraternity and sorority life, but also student affairs. There are a lot of things occurring that require professionals to enhance competence in ways many are not prepared for. Understanding the issues driving higher education today, and how they must be addressed in the context of fraternity and sorority life, is vital for professionals at any stage of their careers. Examples of areas professionals might be unprepared, or unwilling, to address include accessibility, cultural competence, technology and institutional restructuring. Every professional needs to take ownership of their knowledge by taking necessary action to learn in areas where they are ill equipped. To do anything less would be a disservice to the field and to the students.

Many well-intentioned fraternity and sorority life professionals make their work about the students. While this is true, that does not mean all hours in the day should be spent in meetings driven by student agendas. Identify ways to modify work so time can be spent reading and learning new information in order to best serve students. Figure out how to apply new concepts, or talk through the issues, in a safe space with colleagues and other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This article focuses on some challenges fraternity and sorority life professionals face when trying to enact a change initiative. There are common challenges, and opportunities, for anyone who works in fraternity and sorority life: cultural and contextual attributes get in the way, problematic conduct goes unaddressed, the world and higher education landscape is changing, and higher education has a number of responsibilities which individuals are unprepared to fulfill due to inadequate professional preparation. Sometimes it is necessary to start over entirely, but few are prepared to do so. Some communities need minor tweaks, and some need major changes. Regardless of the degree of change needed in each situation, it is vital to know where the problems lie and what strategies can be implemented to address them. Sometimes those strategies feel out of one's comfort zone, but they are nevertheless necessary to make the changes needed for developing a fraternity and sorority community that aligns with the institutional mission. This article provides three ideas for readers to apply in the hope we, as professionals, can address the issues holding both fraternity and sorority communities and departments back from implementing these critical strategies for effective change.

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ALL SUPPORT IS NOT CREATED EQUAL

R. TERESIA GREER

All support is not created equal. The elephant in the room has been addressed. The idea of colleges and universities not providing equal support for all fraternities and sororities is not up for discussion.

There are many examples as to why this idea is considered a reality for most. Some include the following:

- Culturally Based Greek Organizations (CBGOs) were founded as community change agents and support groups for minority college students who were facing social/racial inequalities. Many of which still exist today.
- In addition to the injustices CBGO members face, there is also an overwhelming lack of collegiate support and intentional initiatives for this marginalized community.
- There are a number of professionals within higher education who are charged with advising these organizations yet lack the knowledge and experience to effectively do so.
- There is a lack of organizational management, risk management and leadership training for students and chapter advisors provided by the national leadership for CBGOs and their member organizations.

When an institution allows students to join organizations without proper support mechanisms in place, it is failing the students by creating an environment which does not foster their success. If students are lacking proper guidance, they will begin to chart their own path. Consequently, students are becoming less tied to their organization's purpose and more tied to their personal perception of what the fraternity and sorority experience should look like. Since CBGOs primarily recruit and serve underrepresented communities, the personal development of minority students becomes collateral damage due to this lack of support.

The bottom line is a change in the current model of support is necessary for the survival of all groups, but more specifically CBGOs. Supporting CBGOs is a valuable component for colleges and universities to focus on to intentionally improve minority student academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates. This prompts the question, "how do institutions properly support CBGOs?"

5 THINGS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE DOING:

1 GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON THE "SUPPORT BUS"

This figurative "Support Bus," adopted from Jim Collins', Good to Great, is not a one person job. Rather, it represents a team of people who help cultivate CBGOs. As much as campus based professionals think they can do it on their own, they will not be successful in supporting these groups without a team to help. "First get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figure out where to drive it" (Collins, 2001, p. ###).

There is an invaluable need to have at least one person on this team that culturally identifies with these students. Cultural representation matters. Students need to see there is someone who looks, talks and thinks like them advocating for their success. This team should also be inclusive of campus colleagues, local community partners, and headquarters professionals who can assist in tackling issues these groups will face. One example could be a campus partner who has a great rapport with the students, such as the diversity office. Another good team member might be a residential life staff member who has worked with students in other leadership capacities. Campus professionals can also look to a community leader, such as a Boys and Girls Club staff leader, with a similar lived experience as the students. The one thing to remember when selecting these partners is, above all else, they must see value in cultivating positive fraternity and sorority experiences. Creating a formal structure with this team is less important than developing strong informal relationships. They will serve as allies, facilitators, and mentors to students, and sometimes, the campus based professional. Students also need to see that upper level administrators are supportive of the efforts of the team.

Regardless of the fraternity and sorority community's size, these students still need a team. Without the right people on the team, support efforts will fail, campus based professionals will burn out, and position turnover will be inevitable.

2 ENSURE BASIC NEEDS ARE MET FIRST.

It is perfectly acceptable to invite students to attend an officer training to learn about registering events and submitting paperwork. However, often an institution will host a training program while failing to recognize that CBGOs are facing more pressing issues beyond performing administrative functions for the Fraternity and Sorority Life Office.

Before colleges and universities host programs to ensure groups are compliant, it is important to meet their basic needs. As a campus based professional, knowing the status of each chapter is important to the function of one's job. It is commonly assumed all CBGOs are the same, or that CBGOs function similarly to NIC and NPC groups. This is an erroneous assumption. CBGOs are structurally different in how they recruit, program, fundraise, and socially gather. It is the campus professional's job to understand these differences in order to support CBGOs. A good starting place to obtain the true pulse of each chapter is to conduct monthly meetings to assess student needs. It is important to assist the chapter in functioning at a high operational level, however, it is imperative to student success for institutions to meet their basic needs first.

Basic needs could include: assisting the chapter in facilitating an election process per their national guidelines, providing tips on how to plan and assess an effective program/forum, and guiding groups on how to secure funding to attend nationally mandated conferences when the chapter has limited financial resources. It is also important that educational strategies recognize the emotional and psychological needs of students, as events happening in the community, and greater society, may impact their mental health. Therefore, students may need space to process their thoughts and emotions associated with the potentially overwhelming social injustices in the nation.

Not focusing on basic needs will cause other educational programming to crumble due to lack of a foundation.

3 MODIFY ALL TRAININGS TO MEET EARNING OUTCOMES FOR ALL GROUPS.

Whose job is it anyway? Is it the student's job to decipher who should attend each training, or is it the campus based professional's job to ensure organizations have this understanding?

It is also the campus professional's responsibility to understand that most CBGOs officer positions function differently from their NIC and NPC counterparts. Therefore, language and programming should be inclusive of all groups. For example, if chapters must attend an officer training that includes presidents, recruitment chairs, new member educators, and philanthropy chairs, the campus professional must work with CBGOs to identify which officers within their structure will benefit from the provided programming. Not all chapters have a philanthropy chair. However, there may be officer positions in CGBOs that would benefit from the workshop if the curriculum and title were tweaked to be more inclusive for all chapters.

The timing of programming is an important consideration. This is not a question of what is easiest for administrators, it is a question of what will actually facilitate the learning outcomes for all students. Problems commonly occur when officers for CBGOs receive information half-way through their term due to their election cycle being different than other groups. This may require strategies which tailor each training for each council. This can be a good place to utilize one's support team by engaging subject matter experts to develop relevant and timely programming.

" WHEN AN INSTITUTION ALLOWS STUDENTS TO JOIN ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT PROPER SUPPORT MECHANISMS IN PLACE IT IS FAILING THE STUDENTS BY CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH DOES NOT FOSTER THEIR SUCCESS. "

4 UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EQUALITY AND EQUITY.

Equality and Equity are two words often used interchangeably, but they are very different; especially when discussing support of CBGOs. This can play out in several ways:

Equality - all councils having access to apply for support funding.

Equity - considering the financial needs of each council when creating policy on how students can apply for support funding; ensuring that those who have less will have the opportunity to get more in order to provide adequate support for their funding needs.

Equality - all councils have the opportunity to send five students to an overnight leadership experience.

Equity - councils with less community representation are encouraged, not mandated, to send more students. This provides, equal, or as close to equal, representation of all councils at the retreat. Having the conversation with students about the value of their attendance and allowing CBGOs to make a choice gives them an opportunity to have more voices at the table. They may not always take this opportunity, but offering the option is simply the right thing to do.

Equality - giving all councils access to academic support programs.

Equity - recognizing the councils with specific academic needs per their grade reports and giving these groups or students the resources and support that they need to be academically successful. Is there funding to provide tutors, a CBGO study space, or a learning techniques session that could be offered for specific CBGO chapters? Get feedback from students and campus partners on what they think they need to be successful, and then attempt to meet that need.

Equity should be the only acceptable goal for colleges and universities. This is not a handout. This is not preferential treatment. This is an investment. Commitment to providing equitable resources, experiences, and opportunities to CBGOs positively correlates with CBGOs' recruitment, persistence, and success.

If colleges and universities are committed to the success of their entire fraternity and sorority community, specifically CBGOs, then they must also be committed to identifying current practices that are not equitable and revamping these practices to create an unbiased experience for all students.

5 ADVOCACY IS YOUR JOB.

A story circulated on Facebook a few years ago about the power of using privilege to speak on behalf of others. Two women were in the grocery store, and one went to pay for her items. She was greeted politely by the clerk and immediately paid with a check. The clerk did not ask for ID and checked the woman out within minutes. The second woman approached the counter to pay. She was not greeted by the clerk. When she went to pay with a check, she was asked for two forms of ID. In addition, the clerk checked a binder to ensure the second woman was not listed on the "bad check list." The clerk did not know the two women were friends. The first woman asked the clerk, "Why are you doing this, why are you treating her unfairly?" The clerk responded, "I'm not, I'm just following protocol." The first woman did not back down. She replied, "No you're not because you didn't do that with me, and I've only been in your store once. My friend has been coming to your store for 5 years." The first woman reported the clerk's behavior to the manager.

This story represents the power of advocating for others, not because they do not have the ability, but because it should not always be their responsibility. Often we only equate the term privilege in the context of "white privilege." However, being a fraternity and sorority professional gifts these individuals the privilege to advocate on behalf of students for things they may not even know they need. CBGOs should not always have to explain why they were founded when other fraternities and sororities already existed, or be requested to perform their cultural practices for entertainment. It is the fraternity and sorority professional's job to advocate for student needs while also protecting them in moments where their identity is viewed as a circus act.

Understanding identity, privilege, and cultural awareness is imperative to properly advocate for CGBOs. Institutions can develop staff through educational opportunities centered on identity and privilege education, such as the National Coalition Building Institute. Campus based professionals require space to begin the work of unpacking personal biases and privilege to be better professionals. More importantly, there should be an increased emphasis on listening to the experiences of these students to better understand their journeys.

ALL SUPPORT IS NOT CREATED EQUAL, NOR SHOULD IT BE.

It is up to institutions to create an effective support model for their CBGOs. In doing so, institutional leadership must understand the needs of these students are ever evolving and differ from campus to campus. Fraternity and sorority professionals can impact student success through services and programs which help students in their journey and their identity on that respective campus. No matter how big or small, the impact will have value.

Students in CBGOs need a support system on campus. Simply put, this means fraternity and sorority professionals need to get their team of the right people to drive the bus, honking loudly, cheering for student success, and advocating for an equitable experience, all while training students to make the best decisions for their unique journey.

The students are there. They are just waiting for their institutions to provide the support they deserve.

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ATLANTA GEORGIA

2017 AFA ANNUAL MEETING

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